

The Importance of a Proper Passdown

By AE3 Robert Dubrasky

We have all heard it before: Make sure you get a proper passdown before taking the watch or assuming your shift. Why else would someone show up a half hour before a shift? A better question is: Do most of us give a proper passdown? I would like to think so, but I found out how important it really is.

It was the perfect winter day in the North Arabian Gulf as we neared the end of a six-month deployment. At the end of the fly day, one of our jets came back with a downing discrepancy. After troubleshooting, we determined that the No. 2, top-deck relay box was the source of the problem. Maintenance control gave us the OK to remove and replace the part, and a new one was ordered.

It wasn't long before the part was received, and the night shift began their workday with the usual passdown, or so it seemed at the time. They removed and replaced the relay box. After doing an operational check of the system, they discovered that the downing discrepancy wasn't fixed. Night-check then began to troubleshoot the system to find the problem. After a closer look at the schematics, we discovered that we had changed the wrong top-deck relay box. We had changed the No. 1 relay box instead of No. 2.

The shop removed the No. 2 box and ordered a new one. By this time, it was early in the morning, and flight operations were about to begin. Because of the problem with the wrong box, the jet was not up for flight operations. It wasn't until later in the morning, about 1100, that the new and correct part was replaced, and the



Top-deck relay is found under the turtle back panel.



No. 1 relay and No. 2 relays are similar.

aircraft was returned to full-mission-capable status.

It's common for EA-6B electricians to change the No. 1 relay box but not the No. 2 box. When the electricians saw the gripe and ordered a replacement, they incorrectly assumed it was the No. 1 component.

Our shop had become complacent, and that lax attitude was the key factor in the error. The task was just another routine maintenance discrepancy; however, it didn't turn out to be routine this time. The cost was half a day of missed flights.

How did night-check replace the wrong component? The answer goes beyond complacency; we did not put a detailed passdown in the logbook. We use various logbooks throughout the Navy and Marine Corps

to record important information. Passdown logs are no different. The AEs did a verbal passdown, but we didn't have a written record. The words and message were lost.

What are the learning points here? Approaching the end of deployment, maintainers need to sharpen their focus on seemingly routine tasks so that mistakes are avoided. Use the passdown log and record all the information that is crucial to maintenance and safety, including those items that will help avoid wasted maintenance man-hours and missed sorties. Too many times when a simple log entry is missed, extra work is done that didn't need to occur. Help your shipmates and provide a complete passdown. 🛩️

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